

AVANCSO

ASOCIACION PARA EL AVANCE DE LAS CIENCIAS SOCIALES EN GUATEMALA

**THE IMPACT OF THE CHANGING INTERNATIONAL
CONTEXT ON THE CARIBBEAN BASIN COUNTRIES**

FINAL REPORT

December, 1994

A project sponsored by

**INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH CENTRE
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AVANCSO - IDRC

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I. TECHNICAL REPORT

A. BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

As recorded in the original proposal, this project was conceived in the context of the Pearson Fellowship Program 1989-1990 as a means for developing further cooperation linkages between social researchers in Canada and in Caribbean Basin countries. The purpose of the project was to promote debate on a set of international 'readjusting' conditions (namely, international policies and institutions) whose convergence is increasingly absorbing the role and behavior of developing countries.

The project was approved by IDRC on October, 1991. Its activities focused in two workshops that took place in 1992, in Tlaxcala, Mexico, and in 1994, in Guatemala City, Guatemala. Methodologically, the former dealt with general and theoretical issues, the latter with case studies.

B. FIRST WORKSHOP

The first workshop took place in a convention center at Tlaxcala, near Mexico City, on may 13-16, 1992.

1. Agenda

The First Workshop was divided in two stages. The first one focused on the presentation of the general framework of the project and papers prepared by five of the participants in the following order:

-General framework of the project, by Rubén E. Nájera and Haroldo Dilla.

-Hegemonic shifts and the new world order - The view from the developing world, by Manfred Bienefeld.

-New technologies and less developed countries, by Rubén E. Nájera.

-Governability, governance and human security - A framework for the comparative study of structural adjustment policies in Latin America, by Jorge Nef.

-Labor, gender and adjustment, by Patricia Connelly and Martha MacDonald.

The second stage of the workshop was directed to a general debate, to developing a general framework for the case studies, and to the proposal of the contents of the case studies that will be the main purpose of the second workshop.

Additional material included papers by Ricardo Grinspun (on Mexico and NAFTA), Jorge Nef (on governance and governability), Michel Chossudowsky (on adjustment and capital accumulation) and Juan Alberto Fuentes (on international economic relations).

2. Participants

Twelve researchers from Canada, Mexico, Cuba, Guatemala and Dominican Republic participated in this first workshop.

3. Output

Three major outputs are the result of this first workshop:

1) The four papers quoted *supra*, that will be edited by their authors on the basis of the workshops debate and the participant's suggestions. (These papers have been translated into Spanish and will be published as discussion papers by AVANCSO in 1995). The papers will provide the material for the first part of the book programmed in the project.

2) A general framework for the case studies, that was accepted as a guideline. This framework implies that case studies will be approached as cases on public policy, conceived as an open system, with its own context, ideology, agents, process of decision making (power relations), and effects (both as output of the public policy packages and as impact of policies affecting the context). Highlights on specific issues will be discretionary, as in the insertion of hegemonic centers, the S&T system, gender, debt and environment. Case studies should also deal with an assessment of feasibility and alternatives in terms of the State, popular movements, social alliances. It was also an agreement that the proposed contents of the case studies could be submitted to the 'generalists' (authors of the theoretical papers) in order to obtain a feedback.

3) The establishment of an informal network of researchers that will try to keep contact, exchange information, and perform further activities (publications and workshops) in order to strengthen this effort of cooperation between Canada and Caribbean Basin countries.

C. SECOND WORKSHOP

Due to several problems in coordinating the individual activities of the members of the network, the Second Workshop could not be held, as expected originally, in 1993. With IDRC's approval, it was transferred to 1994 and took place in Guatemala City, at AVANCSO's headquarters, on June 17-19.

1. Agenda

The Second Workshop was organized in four major activities.

First, and considering the time elapsed since the first workshop, an updating of the major theoretical and conceptual issues was necessary. This included the following presentations:

-Current trends in Latin American integration, by Dr Juan Alberto Fuentes-Knight,

- Current trends in North American integration, by Prof Ricardo Grinspun,
- International hegemonic shifts, by Prof. Manfred Bienefeld,
- Competitiveness and technological progress in less developed countries, by Dr Manlio Martínez,
- Human security, by Drs Paz Buttedahl and Claudia Wright, and
- Gender, labour and adjustment, by Profs Patricia Connelly and Martha MacDonald.

Secondly, and following the original structure of the workshops, six case studies were presented:

- Regional case studies:
 - The Caribbean Integration, by Dr Gerardo González
 - Central American Integration, by Eng Rubén E. Nájera
 - North American Integration, by Prof Ricardo Grinspun
- National case studies:
 - The Cuban case, by Dr Haroldo Dilla
 - The Guatemalan case, by Lic Werner Ramírez
 - The Honduran case, by Dr Manlio Martínez

A third activity included the assessment of the project as well as the perspectives of the network of researchers that it has helped to create. The agenda for this activity included a summary of the projects performance, of its products, as well as the adoption of the goals of the network, the objectives for future research and the identification of means for furthering the research agenda.

A final activity included a public panel for the scientific community of Guatemala, where the participants made individual presentations on the major

issues of the project, namely those related to international adjustment, theoretical and methodological approaches to its analysis and to the assessment of its impact on less developed countries.

2. Participants

Eleven researchers from Canada, Mexico, Cuba, Guatemala and Honduras participated in the second workshop. Members of the Board of Directors and of the research staff of AVANCSO participated in different moments of the workshop.

3. Outputs

1) The six papers on regional and national case studies, that will be edited by their authors on the basis of the workshop's debate and the participant's suggestions. (These papers, most of them already in Spanish, will also be published as discussion papers by AVANCSO in 1995). The papers will provide the material for the second part of the book programmed in the project.

2) A videotape of the public panel, that will be edited, copied and distributed as educational material for NGOs and social research centres.

3) Strategic decisions about activities that will be undertaken in order to strengthen the current network of researchers, which is considered the core output of the project. Highlights from our debate include:

-Publication of the book in Spanish and English. AVANCSO will undertake the publication of the Spanish version, while the Canadian researchers will look for funding to do the same in English. Priority on the Spanish publication has been emphasized because of the need of Caribbean Basin countries to access alternative analysis and points of view on international adjustment. While the discussion papers that will be issued in 1995 will be based in the draft versions of the papers, updated versions are expected for the book.

-The evaluation of the coordination of this project has showed the difficulties of lacking a Canadian partner, especially due to the different dynamics of research of the scientific communities of both regions and to the communications gap. The agreement was in the sense of a binodal network, with AVANCSO in the Caribbean Basin side, and CERLAC/York University in the Canadian side. This *modus operandi* will be working by 1995, keeping in mind the organization of future workshops as well as the strengthening of our communications means.

-A major asset of the project has been the interaction of researchers of both regions which has had a strong impact on the insights of the participants with regard to the theory and practice of the issues at stake. With regard to the research agenda the network is interested in furthering the debate on:

- 1) international structural adjustment, to the extent that this is a major issue that remains unresolved;
- 2) on the tactical implications of less developed countries and the task they face under such constraints; and
- 3) the issue of power, in the sense of seeking adjustment in order to build a political basis for more integrated (structured) policies.

Briefly, the common interest of the network are the options for popular and political responses to globalization and structural adjustment in concrete situations that can be the basis for building development alternatives. This includes central topics like regional integration as related to development, external economic insertion, regional security, environment, gender, ethnicity, etc., as well as participation, democracy, governance, human security and political models.